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SUBJECT: MCNS AUGUST 13 - TURKEY, IRAN, AL QAEDA, AND
BAGHDAD SECURITY PLAN

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: At the Ministerial Council on August 13, Prime Minister Maliki welcomed the proposed tripartite talks among the US, Turkey and Iraq on PKK Turkish Kurd terrorist activities. Improved relations with Turkey might also increase imports, and ease Iraq's fuel crisis. Relations with Iran are complex. A new joint Coalition-Iraqi Committee (JCAISSL) was established to focus on the conditions under which Iraq will achieve self reliance. As part of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), the Ministry of Interior is tightening the chain of command over the various police units. Finally, a proposal to improve gun control and ban the public display of unlicensed guns was approved. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S//REL GBR AUS) Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki chaired the Ministerial Council on National Security (MCNS) on Sunday, August 13 to hear an update on Phase II of the Baghdad Security Plan and discuss other issues. Present for the Iraqis were Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, Minister of Defense (MOD) Abdul Qader al-Mufraji, Foreign Minister Hoshayr Zebari, Minister of Finance (MOF) Baqir Jabr al-Zubaydi (aka Bayan Jabr), Justice Minister Hashim al-Shibli, Acting Minister of Interior (MOI) General Kafagee, National Security Advisor (NSA) Dr. Mowaffak Rubaie and Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) Director General Muhammad al-Shawani. The Coalition was represented by the Ambassador, MNF-I Commanding General George Casey, UK Charge Mark Gibson, and Pol-Mil Counselor (notetaker).

Iraq Welcomes Tripartite Process on Turkey's PKK

¶3. (S//REL GBR AUS) Foreign Minister Zebari said Turkey was protesting the activities of the PKK, a Turkish Kurd terrorist organization in northern Iraq, but that Turkey was respecting Iraq's borders. The Prime Minister noted his recent telephone conversation with the Turkish Prime Minister, and welcomed the prospect of trilateral talks soon.

In part because the US is expected to name a retired military officer as the President's Special Envoy, the PM wants to name an Arab military officer as head of an Iraqi delegation with significant Iraqi Kurdish representation. He concluded by saying that the Turks can no longer tolerate PKK attacks from Iraq, and Iraq needs to mend fences by closing PKK offices. The Ambassador asked if the MOI could drive Turkish Embassy officials around the city to verify that the Prime Minister's previous orders to close PKK offices, including one near the Turkish Embassy, have been implemented.

Iraq's Fuel Crisis - Turkey and the Gulf States

¶4. (S//REL GBR AUS) During the discussion of Iraq-Turkish relations, Minister of Finance Bayan Jabr noted that 4,400 fuel tank trucks are blocked at Turkey's Habur Gate border crossing with Iraq, and suggested that action on Turkey's PKK requests might help speed up Turkish Customs. Picking up on this point, the PM mentioned his two pronged approach to dealing with the acute fuel shortage. On the one hand he is raising money among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and hopes to have \$61 million to pay the most immediate overdue fuel bills to the Turks. Minister Jabr said that the previous Iraqi Government had run up a total fuel bill of \$250 million with Turkey, which must be repaid. In addition, the PM and Foreign Minister Zebari agreed to propose expansion of the Habur Gate crossing, and also to build a second border crossing point with Turkey to facilitate cross-border trade.

Relations with Iran are Complex

¶5. (S//REL GBR AUS) The Foreign Minister noted that relations with Iran are complex: Iran seems to support the GOI, evidenced by the ministers of oil and electricity recent visits to Tehran, where they were assured of practical support. Whether Iran follows through on its offer will be one test of Iran's sincerity. Yet Iran continuously violates Iraq sovereign waters in the Shatt al-Arab, and smuggling is rampant. In addition, Iran is increasing support for Iraqi militias' efforts to disrupt coalition forces.

Joint Committee on Achieving Iraqi Security Self-Reliance

¶6. (S//REL GBR AUS) Mowaffak Rubaie briefed on the

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establishment of the proposed Joint Committee on Achieving Iraqi Security Self-Reliance (JCAISSL), with the same composition as the MCNS, saying that it would develop a conditions-based roadmap that will structure the full transition of security responsibility to the GOI, resulting in the gradual withdrawal of MNF from Iraq. When some ministers protested that the MCNS is too big to study such a complex topic, General Casey explained that a sub-group would do the work, and the MCNS would receive updates at the 30 and 60 day marks. When the Acting MOI said that a new committee was not needed, and the Joint Committee on Transition of Security Responsibility (JCTSR) could do this work, the Prime Minister suggested that the MCNS wait and see what the JCAISSL Working Group produces.

Intelligence on planned AQI Attack on Karbala

¶6. (S//REL GBR AUS) During an otherwise lengthy and exceedingly detailed intelligence briefing, the INIS Director, General Muhammad al-Shawani, succeeded in capturing the ministers' attentions when he asserted that al-Qaeda is planning a large attack on the holy city of Karbala, site of the Imam Hussein Shrine. A number of VBIEDs and IEDs were being prepared, and 38 suicide bombers, including 10 females, have been recruited for an attack. Included in the munitions were 277 kilograms of explosives and ammunition that had already been transported into the city. At this point, the Prime Minister became animated and disturbed by the public uproar that would come with a successful attack on the (Shia) shrine, and ordered that additional measures be taken to protect the city. When the NSA Rubaie and MOD questioned the reliability of this report, Shawani asserted that eight separate sources had confirmed this information. Rubaie and the MOD still seemed unconvinced.

Baghdad Security Plan - Tightening Chain of Command

¶7. (S//REL GBR AUS) The MOD and Acting MOI General Kafagee

briefed on Phase II of the Baghdad Security Plan. MOD commented that phase II has started off well and in Baghdad, the level of violence is down this week compared to the recent peaks. The Acting MOI explained that, to increase unity of effort, all forces under the MOI, including the Facilities Protection Service (FPS) now report directly to the chief of police in each section of Baghdad. This move has increased coordination, and will allow the police and FPS to work together to protect facilities such as Mosques and banks. In an aside, the MOI explained that the intent of improving Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) coordination is the same for Basrah, where General Ali Hammadi is the head of the Basrah Security Committee. The General reports directly to the Prime Minister and not the provincial governor. However, more work is needed there to achieve better coordination.

Improved Gun Control

¶ 8. (S//REL GBR AUS) Rubaie briefed on a proposed new rule that would allow each citizen to have in his home one rifle, semi-automatic rifle, or pistol for self-protection, and would ban the public display of any weapons without a MOI issued weapons permit. However, this proposal is also connected with the private Protective Security Details (PSDs), which in some cases have morphed from bodyguards to mini-militias. The Minister of Justice commented that while it is necessary to disarm the militias, continuous and consistent political efforts are necessary to prevent "hot spot districts" in Baghdad from flaring up, otherwise gun control will be sporadic and ineffective. The PM closed the discussion by saying that militias are now carrying weapons in the street, so increased control is necessary both of weapons and of borders to prevent more weapons from entering Iraq.

KHALILZAD